PLANT FACT SHEET

Sonchus oleraceus L.

GENUS *Sonchus* **FAMILY** Asteraceae

COMMON NAMES Milk thistle, Sow thistle

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Root, Leaves, Berries, Fruit, Vegetable, Stems, Flowers

The tender leaves are cooked and eaten as a vegetable. They are also used in salads and soups. They are also fried. They are par boiled or pickled.
The young stalks are peeled and boiled and eaten.
The roots are also used as food.
CAUTION Some forms and species are bitter.

DESCRIPTION

An erect annual hairy herb. It has milky sap. It is 40 to 60 cm high. The plant is bluish-green. The leaves are alternate. The leaves do not have stalks and half clasp the stem. Leaves are 10 to 20 cm long and very coarsely lobed. Flower heads are about 1 cm long and yellow. The fruit is dry and 3 ribbed. It opens to a round white ball. The seeds blow in the wind.

HABITAT

It is a temperate climate plant. It is found occasionally in disturbed or cultivated soil, especially in Mt Province in the Philippines. It occurs between 1000 m and 2500 m altitude. In Java it occurs between 200-2,200 m above sea level. In Nepal it grows between 2000-2800 m altitude. It grows in the central highlands of Vietnam. It can grow in arid places. Tasmania Herbarium. In Sichuan and Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It grows wild from seeds. Seeds are blown in the wind. Seeds can germinate at temperatures between 7°C and 35°C.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The tender leaves can be picked or the whole plant up rooted.

NOTES

Chemical composition (Chinese sample): Protein = 1.2%. Fat = 0.3%. Carbohydrate = 2.4%. Ash = 1.2%.
Reportedly rich in Vitamin C. There are about 60 Sonchus species.
Contains flavonoids, proanthocyanids, saponins, alkaloids, fatty acids, vitamin C, carotenoids. Mineral elements:

sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, iron, copper, zinc, manganese.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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